MARCH 2025

Rock Talk

The Official Newsletter of the Withlacoochee Rockhounds

Aquamarine

The name “aquamarine” is derived from the Latin words aqua meaning “water” and marinus meaning “of the sea.” This etymology reflects the gemstone’s characteristic colors, which range from light blue to deep oceanic hues. Historically, aquamarine has been associated with sailors and the sea, often believed to bring good fortune and protection during voyages. The gemstone belongs to the beryl family, sharing its lineage with other precious stones like emeralds.

Aquamarine has been mined in various parts of the world, including Brazil, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Madagascar. Brazilian aquamarines, in particular, are renowned for their exceptional clarity and vibrant colors. The gemstone’s popularity has grown over centuries, making it a favorite for jewelry pieces such as rings, necklaces, and earrings.

Aquamarine is more than just a beautiful gem; it carries deep symbolic meanings. Historically, it has been regarded as a stone of courage, calming the mind and reducing stress. In ancient times, it was believed to protect sailors from the dangers of the sea, and some cultures considered it a treasure of mermaids.

In modern times, aquamarine is often associated with peace, tranquility, and clarity. Its soothing blue tones are thought to evoke feelings of serenity, making it a popular choice for those seeking emotional balance. The gemstone is also connected to communication and expression, believed to enhance one’s ability to articulate thoughts clearly and with confidence.

As the birthstone for March, aquamarine is said to bring good health, youthfulness, and renewed energy to those who wear it. It is also used in meditation practices to enhance spiritual awareness and inner peace.

This Month's Roundup of Stories

- Aquamarine
- Secretary's Report
- March 2025 Announcements
- Mohs Scale
- Cabelot
- Atlantasite
- How to make a Turquoise Cabochon
- Marston Marble
- Bench Tips

March’s Birthstone - Aquamarine

Aquamarine is often referred to as the “gem of the sea” due to its striking resemblance to the ocean’s colors and its historical ties to sailors and the maritime world. The gemstone’s shimmering blue hues mirror the various shades of seawater, from the light blues of shallow tropical waters to the deep blues of the open ocean.

In folklore, aquamarine was believed to calm the waves and keep sailors safe during their journeys.

Read the entire article at *GeologyScience.com*

Secretary's Report

Minutes and More from Club Secretary - Melodye Steverson

Withlacoochee Rockhounds Monthly Meeting - Minutes

Date 2-12-2025

The meeting was called to order by President Anthony Maffatone at 7:08pm.

We all stood for the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence.

There were no new members to recognize.

There were 3 guests in attendance: Steven, Dorian and Mike.

Michael Steverson made a motion to accept the minutes of our January meeting as printed in the newsletter, Anthony Maffatone seconded. Passed by all members.

Treasurer Janet Wheeler gave the Treasurer's report.

President Maffatone began with announcements; "We have applications here for members to apply to the club's 2025 scholarship for the William Holland School of Lapidary Arts." He continued by describing the qualifications for applying, and details of the scholarship presentation.

President Maffatone also announced that each member present was required to complete a survey that was passed out to them upon entry to the meeting, and explained that it was important to help the Board of Directors plan the classes that will be scheduled for the members this year. He said the Board is working on scheduling many classes and there will be changes in the way they are presented. The classes will have fees for taking the class and some will require students to purchase and bring their own tools, which will encourage them to continue their craft at home. Classes will be paid for in advance with no refunds for being absent from a class. Instructors will be given compensation. The Board will be working this out with each individual teacher. Classes will also have prerequisites. So beginning students will have to go through beginner classes before they can sign up for level 2 or 3 classes.

The Board is working hard to make sure our classes will be top notch! During the meeting, President Maffatone recognized several members that wished to address the audience:

Michele Evans thanked everyone that bought items from her last month. She gave the money to a friend who needed help, and said she would continue to sell items to raise more money for her friend.

Diane Hensley announced that there was a "Bucket Mining" event on a private residence this weekend in Hudson and gave directions and hours.

Janice Wojcik announced the "Rockhound Roundup" on February 28th – March 2nd in Suwanee, Florida. No admission fee. Lots of rocks!

Roberta Oldread inquired about club patches and if we have any left. President Maffatone said he had no idea but would find out.

Heidi Hale told members about the Wire wrapping she plans to teach in the coming months.

James Roush made a motion to adjourn the meeting, VP Steverson seconded, passed by all.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:40pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Secretary Melodye Steverson.

Clubhouse Address:
3357 Susan Dr
Spring Hill, FL 34606

March 2025 Announcements

Jean Casanova has friend whose mother passed away, and is looking to sell the collection of rocks, crystals and more that her mother acquired over the years. Please call Jean to schedule a time to visit her and look through the collection. 352.442.2667

Below are some images of some of the items she has.

Michele Evans has some additional items she is looking to sell.

Below are some of her items. Michele says prices between $5 to $25.

The amber from Poland will be slightly higher.

See Michele at our next meeting.

What is the Mohs Scale of Hardness?

The Mohs Scale is a tool to help identify minerals based on their hardness compared to 10 selected minerals. It is based on the observation that one mineral will scratch another mineral but not vice versa. Diamond (the hardest mineral) easily scratches talc (the softest mineral), but talc will never leave a scratch on a diamond.

Mohs is just one of several hardness scales a geologist might use. Others include the Vickers, Brinell, Meyer, Rockwell and Knoop scales.

Ten minerals make up the Mohs Scale from softest to hardest, they are talc (1), gypsum (2), calcite (3), fluorite (4), apatite (5), feldspar (6), quartz (7), topaz (8), corundum (9) and diamond (10). Mohs selected these minerals because they have clear differences in hardness and they are fairly common and accessible. On a scale, you often see the 10 minerals spaced out evenly. This is just so the scale can be easily seen. In reality, the hardness amounts between each are pretty even except when you get to corundum and diamond. Those two have a great difference between them.

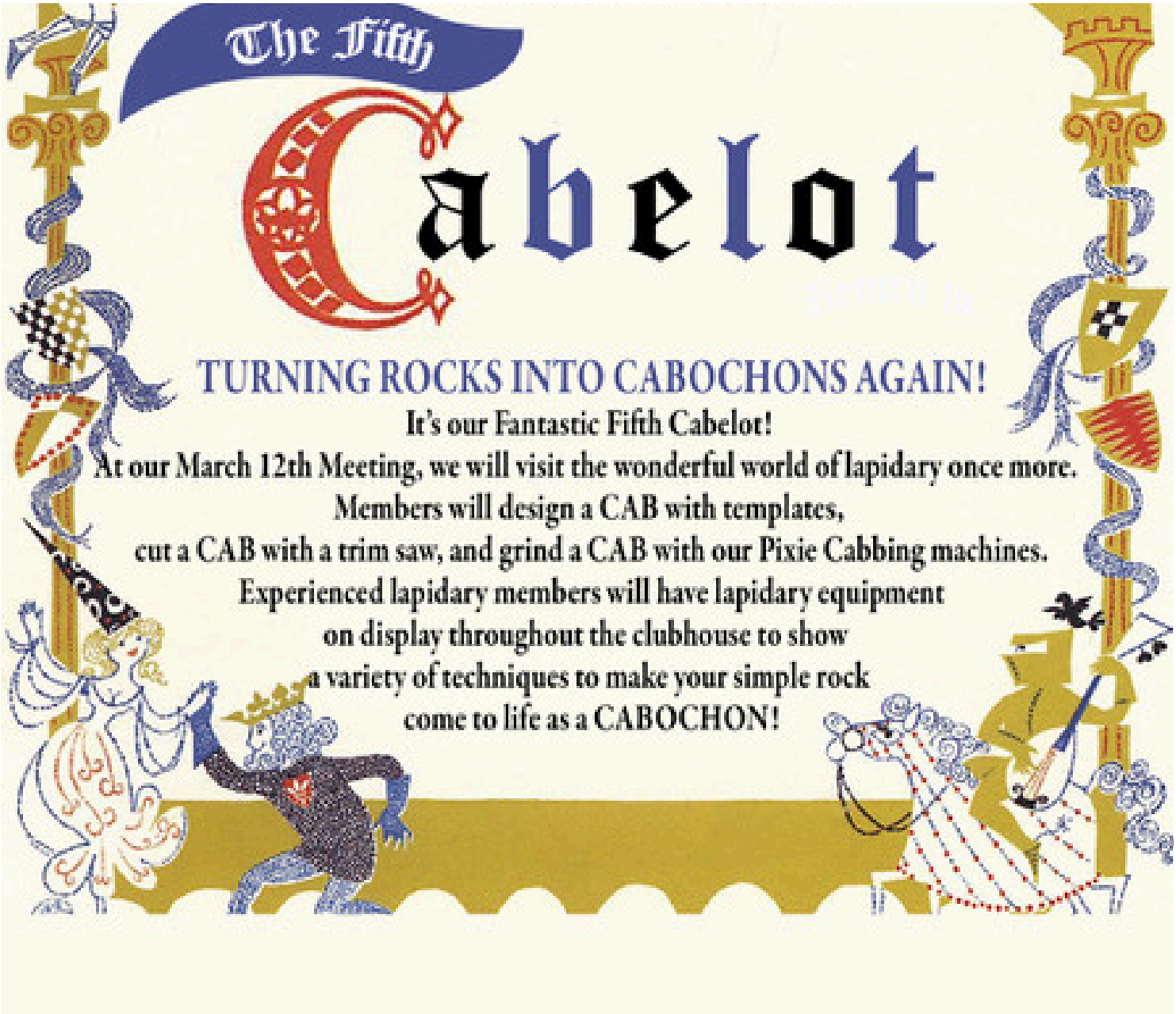
German geologist and mineralogist Carl Friedrich Christian Mohs (1773-1839) created this scale in 1822. (Some sources say Mohs devised his scale in 1812. That is true. He first suggested a hardness scale in 1812 but didn't formally unveil his famous scale until 1822 when he published his definitive book Treatise of Mineralogy.)

He also created a system to identify crystal shapes. He believed in sorting minerals by traits like hardness and shape rather than by chemical makeup as most mineralogists of his day were doing.

The Mohs Scale is still a useful and important tool. All minerals today are given a Mohs hardness number that shows where they rank next to the ten minerals on the scale.

Most fall within a range. For instance, tourmaline is ranked Mohs hardness 7.0 to 7.5. Garnet is ranked 6.5 to 7.5.

Read the article at RockNGem.com



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Atlantasite (Tasmanite)

Atlantasite, also known as Tasmanite, is a beautiful and relatively rare gemstone that combines two minerals: serpentine and stichtite. Its name originates from the locality where it was first discovered – in the vicinity of the small mining town of Zeehan on the west coast of Tasmania, Australia.

The name "Atlantasite" is derived from "Atlas," the Greek mythological figure, and "site," which refers to its mineral composition.

The discovery of Atlantasite dates back to the early 20th century, around the 1930s, during mining operations for nickel in the region. Miners initially disregarded it as waste material, but its unique combination of serpentine and stichtite caught the attention of gemstone enthusiasts and collectors.

Serpentine, a common mineral found in many places worldwide, forms the green component of Atlantasite. It is often mottled or veined with purple to pink streaks of stichtite, a rare mineral that gives Atlantasite its distinctive coloration. Stichtite is named after Robert Sticht, who was the manager of the mine where it was first discovered.

Atlantasite is composed of two primary minerals: serpentine and stichtite.

1. **Serpentine:**
   - In Atlantasite, serpentine provides the green base coloration and forms the majority of the gemstone's composition.
2. **Stichtite:**
   - Stichtite is renowned for its vivid purple to pink coloration, which contrasts beautifully with the green serpentine in Atlantasite.

Atlantasite's rarity, combined with its striking coloration and unique patterns, has made it popular among lapidaries and jewelry designers. Its metaphysical properties are also said to promote inner peace, balance, and emotional healing, further adding to its appeal in the realm of alternative healing and spirituality.

Today, Atlantasite is not only treasured for its beauty but also appreciated for its historical significance and geological rarity.

Read the entire article at *GeologyScience.com*

How to Make a Turquoise Cabochon

A turquoise cabochon and turquoise jewelry, in general, uses one of the most prestigious stones in lapidary. It's been used for thousands of years. It was even used in King Tut's burial mask in Ancient Egypt. It can be found in almost all regions of the world from Turkey and China to North America. Colored by copper, the colors in turquoise range from blue to green.

Turquoise has a hardness of 5 to 6 on the Mohs scale. The most sought turquoise is usually the evenly balanced single-colored stones or specimens with spider webbing and some matrix showing.

Over the years, turquoise has seemingly lost some value because of treatments and imitations that flood the market. There are many examples of turquoise becoming extremely rare. This is because of the closures of mines or through the process of depletion.

When purchasing material for a turquoise cabochon, it can be very hard to tell what you will get by purchasing rough material. What you see on the outside can be entirely different from what you get once it's cut and polished. If you are new to cutting turquoise, it might be best to find cut slabs. This will allow you to see what the material will look like.

If you are new to cutting turquoise, it might be best to find cut slabs. This will allow you to see what the material will look like.

Many times turquoise can be just on the surface and not run all the way through the stone. But by buying already cut material, you can alleviate buying something unusable or picking up something that has too much waste material. This is especially true since you are buying turquoise cabochon material by the pound.

Another thing to always ask when purchasing is whether the material has been stabilized. The majority of all turquoise nowadays has been stabilized, but if you find the natural material you will have to consider an entirely different perspective and greater patience when cutting and cabbing this material.

Read the article at *RockNGem.com*

Marston Marble

Marston Marble is a unique and highly ornamental type of fossiliferous limestone, valued for its artistic and aesthetic qualities. It is characterized by very dense white and cream-colored ammonite Promicroceras planicosta into a vibrant black background. The said fossils are well preserved, hence the attraction to use them for ornamental specimens, such as tabletops and jewelry, and other creations of the arts.

The Marston Marble was formed in the Jurassic, Lower Jurassic to be precise, approximately 200–175 million years ago. During that time, what we now call Somerset was underwater in a shallow sea, where sediments were laid down, containing ammonites. Over millions of years, these sediments have compressed and solidified into limestone, with the ammonites beautifully preserved within the rock matrix.

The Marston Marble is extracted nowhere else but from around Marston Magna, Somerset, England. Indeed, this small area of Somerset is the principal, nearly sole source of this unique limestone. The geological strata in this region also form part of the larger geological setting that characterizes the Jurassic Coast— a world heritage site noted for its extensive fossil records and geological history. Marston Marble has been extracted and worked since ancient times; the unique aesthetic qualities of the material have made it a locus of attraction for local artisans and international collectors.
The Marston Marble is perhaps best known for its abundant and well-preserved ammonites, all of the species Promicroceras planicosta. They are small, averaging a few centimeters in diameter up to about 10cm, but some grow larger. They have strongly ribbed, tightly coiled shells.

Read the entire article at *GeologyScience.com*

Field Trips

"Note: The Withlacoochee Rockhounds Club does not sponsor field trips other than trips that are sanctioned by the SFMS (The Southeast Federation of Mineralogical Societies).

Our club insurance is through SFMS and does not cover excursions not listed on their website as safe."
The SFMS insurance covers the property owner where members might go, but not the club members.

Monthly Meeting Courtesy

Our monthly meetings are a time for members to get together to share their love of rocks, minerals and fossils. It is a chance to learn from each other, teach each other and bond with people that have common interests. It's also a time for the club to conduct a business meeting, during which club Officers and Directors inform club members of changes that have happened or are proposed to happen in the future to club procedure or rules.
It is a time for announcements of coming classes, programs, scholarships, and special events.
It may be a time for discussion on a topic if it is of concern to a majority of members present.
Members may also share experiences and news of interest to other members.
Our monthly meetings should always be a time of sharing, education and entertainment.

We should all show respect and consideration for each other at our meetings, especially for the Facilitator of the meeting, whether it be our President or one of our other Officers. This respect has been lacking in our meetings for several months now. A few attendees have been speaking out without being recognized, shouting, and making inappropriate comments. This not only disrupts our meetings but makes members, new and old, feel uneasy and uncomfortable. It makes our club seem very unprofessional and is disrespectful to the Officers, Directors, and your fellow members.

Going forward, our Board has decided to strive for a more business-like atmosphere while our business meetings are in order. If you are an attending member and have a question or comment, please raise your hand and wait to be recognized by the Facilitator of the meeting. After you are acknowledged and speak, if you later have something else to add, please raise your hand and again be recognized to speak. Please be respectful and polite when you are addressing the Officers and Directors, who volunteer their time, work tirelessly, and make every effort to keep this club alive and prosperous.

We feel this will make for a smoother meeting with all members being heard. No members will be shouted over and no members will feel over run with chaotic outbursts. We will all feel a part of the meeting and will learn more about what our club is doing for and with us.

Withlacoochee Rockhounds

Our monthly club meeting is held at the Weeki Wachee Senior Citizens Club, 3357 Susan Dr., Spring Hill, FL 34606, on the 2nd Wednesday of each month from 7:00 to 9:00 PM

www.withlacoocheerockhounds.com

Your Business Card Size Ad in Rock Talk

The cost for non-club members to advertise their businesses in Rock Talk is $10.00 per month. Contact Michael Steverson to set up an ad in both the newsletter and the club website. It will benefit both your business and our club.

Advertisers Needed

Please help us find advertisers for the *Rock Talk* and our website. The club can use the monthly income. Both the *Rock Talk* and our website have more exposure than only club members

Contact club treasure Janet Wheeler: ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com
or send to: Withlacoochee Rockhounds
PO Box 5634
Spring Hill, FL 34611-5634

Withlacoochee Rockhounds

Purpose

We are a non-profit organization whose purpose is to foster interest and promote knowledge of minerals, gems, fossils, lapidary arts, and earrth sciences, through regular meetings, informative programs, and workshops. PLUS, our annual gem, mineral and jewelry show.

Membership is open to anyone sharing such interests.

Dues

Dues are $35.00 annually for adults, and $5.00 for children under 18 years of age.

Club Meeting Location and Time

Weeki Wachee Senior Citizens Center, 3375 Susan Dr in Spring Hill. Meetings are held the second Wednesday of the month at 7:00PM

2025 Club Officers and Appointees

President	Anthony Maffatone	352.397.7694	anthonymaffatone@gmail.com
Vice President	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	highlander56@gmail.com
Secretary	Melodye Steverson	352.683.9496	melodye@designsbymelodye.com
Treasurer	Janet Wheeler	727.938.3644	ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com
Rock Talk Editor	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	highlander56@gmail.com
Club Webmaster	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	highlander56@gmail.com
Mailing Reporter	Janet Wheeler	727.938.3644	ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com
Audio/Visual Coordinator	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	highlander56@gmail.com

Anthony Maffatone (President) Michael Steverson (Vice President) Melodye Steverson (Secretary) Janet Wheeler (Treasurer)
Hunter Mellring Leslie Newberry Roger Wheeler James Roush Ralph Barber (Past President)

Bench Tips from Brad Smith

Brad Smith's *Bench Tips* are a monthly feature of Rock Talk

EMERY BOARDS

I feel the key to getting a lustrous polish on your jewelry work is having a good selection of sandpaper handy for prepolishing before going to the buffer. I generally start around 400 grit and then go to 800 and 1200.

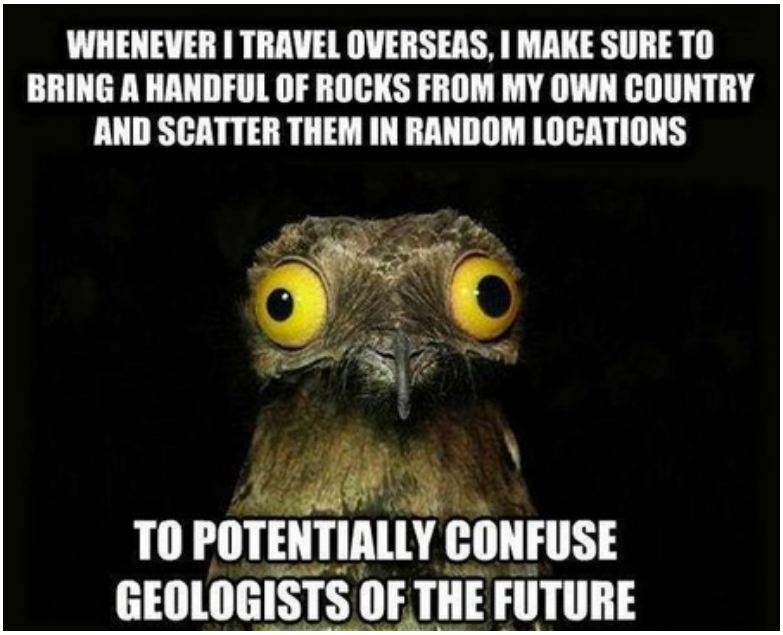
While some projects do require sheets of sandpaper, my favorite way of sanding small jewelry items is to use emery boards for doing your nails. I like the ones with a thin foam core. They have enough resistance to sand the high points off a flat surface and yet give a little when you're trying to smooth off a curved surface.

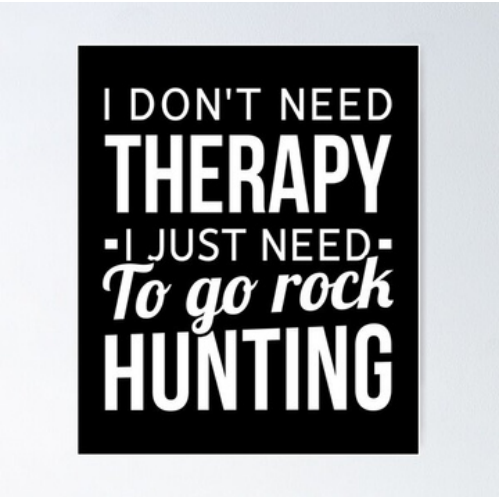
These nail boards are inexpensive and come in a variety of grits. Some grits are so fine they give an almost finished surface. Pick up a few at a beauty supply company, at your local drug store, or from Amazon.

Learn New Skills with Brad's "How To Do It" Books

Amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith

Rock Talk Funny Papers





From The Editor

Hello to all Withlacoochee Rockhounds

It is I, your friendly neighborhood editor again.

For our February meeting, member Chris Ward gave us a presentation on Malawi Agates. After his presentation, everyone got an agate, and brought it over to trim saws that were manned by saw operators. Everyone went home with a cut agate, with some interesting interiors!

Our March meeting marks the return of a club favorite -- CABELOT!
Club members will design a cabochon using templates, have them roughly shaped on a trim saw, and then have them cabbed by experienced club members on our Pixie cabbing machines.

Also, remember that we are now into the new year, and membership dues are due. You can pay at the monthly meeting or, let me know and I can send a payment link to you. If your dues are not paid by the March meeting, you will not longer officially be a paid member. Please be sure to pay!

If you would like to place a business card ad in the newsletter, please feel free to contact me, and we'll get you added to the next available issue.

Additionally, if any of you have not received your newsletter or are not receiving my e-mail blasts (meetings, rock sales, etc.), *please* check your spam folder. If you are still not receiving them, please contact me, and let's make sure I have your correct e-mail address.

Our Board would like our members to come up with suggestions for programs to be presented at our monthly meetings. What would you like to see? What would you like to learn? What would you like to know? Is there something you'd like to teach or present? You can help our club expand its educational repertoire. We'd love to hear from you all.

Contact any Board member or bring your written suggestions to a meeting.

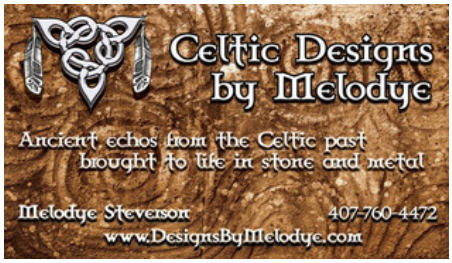
Rock On!!!

Club Phone Number - 352.587.2714

Warning to Withlacoochee Rockhound Members

During the last several months, illicit requests have been sent to members of various clubs in the US, including the Withlacoochee Rockhounds, asking members to purchase gift cards that would be used as donations to various organizations.
These are SCAMS.
Be advised that our club has never and will never ask members to buy gift cards or provide any form of monitary funds to anyone or any organization by phone call, email, or any other method of communication.

Rockhounds Advertisers



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If your ad has a web address, or Etsy shop address, I have linked to it.

Advertisers Are Needed
Please help us find advertisers for the Rock Talk and our website.
The monthly income from these ads is beneficial to the club.
Both the Rock Talk and our website have more exposure than only club members.
Contact club treasurer Janet Wheeler: ceecgirl@tampabay.rr.com or send to:
Withlacoochee Rockhounds
PO Box 5634 Spring Hill, FL 34611-5634

Membership Form - 2025

Withlacoochee Rockhounds
Hernando County FL

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Full Name _____

Partner's Full Name _____
* If both applying for membership

Child's Full Name _____
* If under 18, and applying with parent

Street Address _____

City _____

State / ZIP _____

Phone Number _____

Email _____

Annual Membership Dues:

*Choose your type of membership

- ☐ Individual Membership $35.00/ea
- ☐ Individual Membership $35.00/ea
- ☐ Under 18 Membership $5.00/ea
- ☐ Under 18 Membership $5.00/ea

- ☐ Returning Member?
- ☐ New Member?

If you are applying, for example, as husband, wife and child (under 18), then fill in full name, partner's name and child's name above. Then, choose two individual memberships to the left, along with an under 18 membership.

Give this completed form, along with your check (made payable to "Withlacoochee Rockhounds") or credit card for dues to Club Secretary Janet Wheeler at a club meeting. Or, you may mail the form to:

Withlacoochee Rockhounds
PO Box 5634
Spring Hill, FL 34611-5634